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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000854

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2016
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [EFIN](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: SECURITY AND MILITIA FORCES WAGE
BATTLE OVER MARITIME POLICE STRIKE

Classified By: Economic Officer Erfana Dar, reasons 1.4(B) and (D)

¶1. (U) On the morning of Monday, July 31, national security forces of the Command Center for Security Operations (CECOS) fought a battle with members of the armed, pro-Gbagbo Patriotic Group for Peace (GPP) and Young Patriots militia in the busy downtown district of Plateau in Abidjan, after the GPP had intervened violently to end a sit-in by members of the maritime police. Around 150 GPP militia members attacked the 20-30 maritime police protestors, injuring most of them and stripping them of their uniforms (there were varying reports that the GPP either arrived already armed or confiscated the weapons of police on the scene). CECOS and other security forces responded to the incident and a shoot-out ensued between CECOS and the GPP. Reportedly, two CECOS soldiers and one GPP member were injured, and 12 GPP members were arrested by CECOS. Photos of the humiliated maritime police were published in the local press. In the wake of this incident, General Philippe Mangou, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Cote d'Ivoire (FANCI) called an emergency meeting August 1 with the heads of all the various branches of the national security forces.

¶2. (C) The maritime police are the Ivoirian equivalent of the Coast Guard, about 600 persons monitoring the maritime coasts and waterways to enforce safety and security standards. They report to the Office of Maritime and Port Affairs in the Ministry of Transportation. A group of maritime police began a sit-in at the office of the Director General of Maritime and Port Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Christophe Tibe Bi-Ballo, on Monday July 24, to protest the non-payment of bonus allowances. The protesters accused Bi-Ballo of embezzling funds and demanded his removal. Although the protest was illegal, Transport Minister Kobenan Anaky, who is the leader of the opposition MFA (Movement of Forces for the Future) party, was trying to resolve it through negotiation. According to RSO sources, Bi-Ballo personally called on the GPP and Young Patriots for support.

¶3. (C) Contacts within the maritime police have told us that the "silent majority" of the force members did not support the sit-in because security forces are forbidden to take such actions.

¶4. (C) Comment: It is good that CECOS quickly intervened and stopped the GPP. Nevertheless, the GPP's action was a humiliation not only for the maritime police but for all the security forces, and it is likely to increase resentment and undermine morale within the military. End Comment.
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